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Songs of Labor

Morris Rosenfeld

*Translated from the Yiddish by
Rose Pastor Stokes and Helena Frank*

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Songs of
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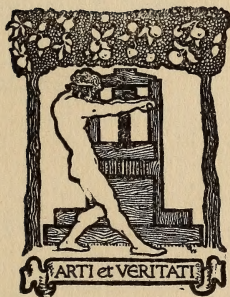


SONGS OF LABOR

AND OTHER POEMS BY

MORRIS ROSENFELD

*Translated from the Yiddish by
Rose Pastor Stokes and Helena Frank*

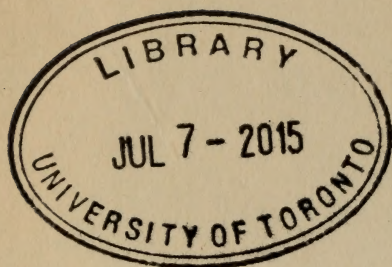


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CONTENTS

	PAGE
In the Factory.....	7
My Boy	10
The Nightingale to the Workman.....	12
What is the World?.....	14
Despair	16
Whither?	18
From Dawn to Dawn.....	19
The Candle Seller.....	21
The Pale Operator.....	24
The Beggar Family.....	25
A Millionaire	28
September Melodies.....	29
Depression	31
The Canary	32
Want and I.....	33
The Phantom Vessel.....	36
To my Misery.....	38
O Long the Way.....	40
To the Fortune Seeker.....	41
My Youth.....	42
In the Wilderness.....	44
I've Often Laughed	45
Again I Sing my Songs.....	46
Liberty	48
A Tree in the Ghetto.....	50

The Cemetery Nightingale	52
The Creation of Man.....	54
Journalism	56
Pen and Shears.....	57
For Hire	58
A Fellow Slave	59
The Jewish May.....	61
The Feast of Lights	65
Chanukah Thoughts	66
Sfêré	67
Measuring the Graves	70
The First Bath of Ablution	72
Atonement Evening Prayer.....	74
Exit Holiday	75

SONGS OF LABOR AND OTHER POEMS

IN THE FACTORY

Oh, here in the shop the machines roar so wildly,
That oft, unaware that I am, or have been,
I sink and am lost in the terrible tumult;
And void is my soul . . . I am but a machine.

I work and I work and I work, never ceasing;
Create and create things from morning till e'en;
For what?—and for whom—Oh, I know not!
Oh, ask not!

Who ever has heard of a conscious machine?

No, here is no feeling, no thought and no reason;
This life-crushing labor has ever suppress
The noblest and finest, the truest and richest,
The deepest, the highest and humanly best.
The seconds, the minutes, they pass out forever,
They vanish, swift fleeting like straws in a gale.
I drive the wheel madly as tho' to o'ertake them,—
Give chase without wisdom, or wit, or avail.

The clock in the workshop,—it rests not a moment;
It points on, and ticks on: Eternity—Time;
And once someone told me the clock had a meaning,—

Its pointing and ticking had reason and rhyme.
And this too he told me,—or had I been dreaming,—

The clock wakened life in one, forces unseen,
And something besides; . . . I forget what;
Oh, ask not!

I know not, I know not, I am a machine.

At times, when I listen, I hear the clock plainly;—
The reason of old—the old meaning—is gone!
The maddening pendulum urges me forward
To labor and labor and still labor on.
The tick of the clock is the Boss in his anger!
The face of the clock has the eyes of a foe;
The clock—Oh, I shudder—dost hear how it drives
me ?
It calls me “Machine!” and it cries to me “Sew!”

At noon, when about me the wild tumult ceases,
And gone is the master, and I sit apart,
And dawn in my brain is beginning to glimmer,
The wound comes agape at the core of my heart;
And tears, bitter tears flow; ay, tears that are
scalding;
They moisten my dinner—my dry crust of bread;
They choke me,—I cannot eat;—no, no, I cannot!
Oh, horrible toil! born of Need and of Dread.

The sweatshop at mid-day—I’ll draw you the picture:
A battlefield bloody; the conflict at rest;
Around and about me the corpses are lying;
The blood cries aloud from the earth’s gory breast.
A moment . . . and hark! The loud signal
is sounded,
The dead rise again and renewed is the fight . . .
They struggle, these corpses; for strangers, for
strangers!
They struggle, they fall, and they sink into night.

I gaze on the battle in bitterest anger,
And pain, hellish pain wakes the rebel in me!
The clock—now I hear it aright!— It is crying:
“An end to this bondage! An end there must be!”
It quickens my reason, each feeling within me;
It shows me how precious the moments that fly.
Oh, worthless my life if I longer am silent,
And lost to the world if in silence I die.

The man in me sleeping begins to awaken;
The thing that was slave into slumber has passed:
Now; up with the man in me! Up and be doing!
No misery more! Here is freedom at last!
When sudden: a whistle!—the Boss—an alarum!—
I sink in the slime of the stagnant routine;—
There's tumult, they struggle, oh, lost is my ego;—
I know not, I care not, I am a machine! . . .

MY BOY

I have a little boy at home,
A pretty little son;
I think sometimes the world is mine
In him, my only one.

But seldom, seldom do I see
My child in heaven's light;
I find him always fast asleep . . .
I see him but at night.

Ere dawn my labor drives me forth;
'Tis night when I am free;
A stranger am I to my child;
And strange my child to me.

I come in darkness to my home,
With weariness and—pay;
My pallid wife, she waits to tell
The things he learned to say.

How plain and prettily he asked:
“Dear mamma, when's ‘Tonight’?
O when will come my dear papa
And bring a penny bright?”

I hear her words—I hasten out—
This moment must it be!—
The father-love flames in my breast:
My child must look at me!

I stand beside the tiny cot,
And look, and list, and—ah!
A dream-thought moves the baby-lips:
“O, where is my papa!”

I kiss and kiss the shut blue eyes;
I kiss them not in vain.
They open,—O they see me then!
And straightway close again.

“Here’s your papa, my precious one;—
A penny for you!”—ah!
A dream still moves the baby-lips:
“O, where is my papa!”

And I—I think in bitterness
And disappointment sore;
“Some day you will awake, my child,
To find me nevermore.”

THE NIGHTINGALE TO THE WORKMAN

Fair summer is here, glad summer is here!
O hark! 'tis to you I am singing:
The sun is all gold in a heaven of blue,
The birds in the forest are trilling for you,
The flies 'mid the grasses are winging;
The little brook babbles—its secret is sweet.
The loveliest flowers would circle your feet,—
And you to your work ever clinging! . . .
Come forth! Nature loves you. Come forth!
Do not fear!

Fair summer is here, glad summer is here,
Full measure of happiness bringing.
All creatures drink deep; and they pour wine
anew
In the old cup of life, and they wonder at you.
Your portion is waiting since summer began;
Then take it, oh, take it, you laboring man!

'Tis summer today; ay, summer today!
The butterflies light on the flowers.
Delightfully glistens the silvery rain,
The mountains are covered with greenness again,
And perfumed and cool are the bowers.
The sheep frisk about in the flowery vale,
The shepherd and shepherdess pause in the dale,
And these are the holiest hours! . . .
Delay not, delay not, life passes away!
'Tis summer today, sweet summer today!
Come, throttle your wheel's grinding power! . . .
Your worktime is bitter and endless in length;
And have you not foolishly lavished your strength?

O think not the world is with bitterness rife,
But drink of the wine from the goblet of life.

O, summer is here, sweet summer is here!
I cannot forever be trilling;
I flee on the morrow. Then, you, have a care!
The crow, from the perch I am leaving, the air
With ominous cries will be filling.
O, while I am singing to you from my tree
Of love, and of life, and of joy yet to be,
Arouse you!—O why so unwilling! . . .
The heavens remain not so blue and so clear;—
Now summer is here! Come, summer is here!
Reach out for the joys that are thrilling!
For like you who fade at your wheel, day by day,
Soon all things will fade and be carried away.
Our lives are but moments; and sometimes the
cost
Of a moment o'erlooked is eternity lost.

WHAT IS THE WORLD?

Well, say you the world is a chamber of sleep,
And life but a sleeping and dreaming?
Then I too would dream: and would joyously reap
The blooms of harmonious seeming;
The dream-flow'rs of hope and of freedom, per-
chance,
The rich are so merrily reaping;—
In Love's eyes I'd fancy the joy of romance;
No more would I dream Love is weeping.

Or say you the world is a banquet, a ball,
Where everyone goes who is able?
I too wish to sit like a lord in the hall
With savory share at the table.
I too can enjoy what is wholesome and good,
A morsel both dainty and healthy;
I have in my body the same sort of blood
That flows in the veins of the wealthy.

A garden you say is the world, where abound
The sweetest and loveliest roses?
Then would I, no leave asking, saunter around
And gather me handfuls of posies.
Of thorns I am sure I would make me no wreath;
(Of flowers I am very much fonder).
And with my beloved the bowers beneath
I'd wander, and wander, and wander.

But ah! if the world is a battlefield wild,
Where struggle the weak with the stronger,
Then heed I no storm and no wife and no child!—
I stand in abeyance no longer;—
Rush into the fire of the battle nor yield,
And fight for my perishing brother;
Well, if I am struck—I can die on the field;
Die gladly as well as another. . . .

DESPAIR

No rest—not one day in the seven for me?
Not one, from the maddening yoke to be free?
Not one to escape from the boss on the prow,
His sinister glance and his furious growl,
The cry of the foreman, the smell of the shop,—
To feel for one moment the manacles drop?
—'Tis rest then you want; and you fain would for-
get?
To rest and oblivion they'll carry you yet.

The flow'rs and the trees will have withered ere
long,
The last bird already is ending his song;
And soon will be leafless and shadeless the
bow'rs . . .
I long, oh I long for the perfume of flow'rs!
To feel for a moment ere stripped are the trees,
In meadow lands open, the breath of the breeze.
—*You long for the meadow lands breezy and fair?*
O, soon enough others will carry you there.

The rivulet sparkles with heavenly light,
The wavelets they glisten, with diamonds bedight.
Oh, but for a moment to leap in the stream,
And play in the waters that ripple and gleam!
My body is weakened with terrible toil.—
The bath would refresh me, renew me the while.
—*You dream of a bath in the shimmering stream?*
'Twill come—when forever is ended your dream.

The sweatshop is smoky and gloomy and mean—
I strive—oh, how vainly I strive to be clean!
All day I am covered with grime and with dirt.
You'd laugh,—but I long for a spotless white shirt!
For life that is noble, 'tis needful, I ween,
To work as a man should; and still be as clean.
—*So now 'tis your wish all in white to be dressed?
In white they will robe you, and lay you to rest.*

The woods they are cool, and the woods they are
free;—
To dream and to wander, how sweet it would be!
The birds their eternal glad holiday keep;
With song that enchants you and lulls you to sleep.
'Tis hot here,—and close! and the din will not
cease.
I long for the forest, its coolth and its peace.
—*Ay, cool you will soon be; and not only cool,
But cold as no forest can make you, O Fool!*

I long for a friend who will comfort and cheer,
And fill me with courage when sorrow is near;
A comrade, of treasures the rarest and best,
Who gives to existence its crown and its crest;
And I am an orphan—and I am alone;
No friend or companion to call me his own.
—*Companions a-plenty—they're numberless too;
They're swarming already and waiting for you.*

WHITHER?

(*To a Young Girl*)

Say whither, whither, pretty one?
The hour is young at present!
How hushed is all the world around!
Ere dawn—the streets hold not a sound.
O whither, whither do you run?
Sleep at this hour is pleasant.
The flowers are dreaming, dewy-wet;
The bird-nests they are silent yet.
Where to, before the rising sun
The world her light is giving?

“To earn a living.”

O whither, whither, pretty child,
So late at night a-strolling?
Alone—with darkness round you curled?
All rests!—and sleeping is the world.
Where drives you now the wind so wild?
The midnight bells are tolling! . . .
Day hath not warmed you with her light;
What aid can'st hope then from the night?
Night's deaf and blind!—Oh whither, child,
Light-minded fancies weaving?

“To earn a living.”

FROM DAWN TO DAWN

I bend o'er the wheel at my sewing;
I'm spent; and I'm hungry for rest;
No curse on the master bestowing,—
No hell-fires within me are glowing,—
Tho' pain flares its fires in my breast.

I mar the new cloth with my weeping,
And struggle to hold back the tears;
A fever comes over me, sweeping
My veins; and all through me goes creeping
A host of black terrors and fears.

The wounds of the old years ache newly;
The gloom of the shop hems me in;
But six o'clock signals come duly:
O, freedom seems mine again, truly . . .
Unhindered I haste from the din.

* * * * *

Now home again, ailing and shaking,
With tears that are blinding my eyes,
With bones that are creaking and breaking,
Unjoyful of rest . . . merely taking
A seat; hoping never to rise.

I gaze round me: none for a greeting!
By Life for the moment unpressed,
My poor wife lies sleeping—and beating
A lip-tune in dream false and fleeting,
My child mumbles close to her breast.

I look on them, weeping in sorrow,
And think: "When the Reaper has come—
When finds me no longer the morrow—
What aid then?—from whom will they borrow
The crust of dry bread and the home?

"What harbors that morrow," I wonder,
"For them when the breadwinner's gone?—
When sudden and swift as the thunder
The bread-bond is broken asunder,
And friend in the world there is none."

A numbness my brain is o'ertaking . . .
To sleep for a moment I drop:
Then start! . . . In the east light is break-
ing!—
I drag myself, ailing and aching,
Again to the gloom of the shop.

THE CANDLE SELLER

In Hester Street, hard by a telegraph post,
There sits a poor woman as wan as a ghost.
Her pale face is shrunk, like the face of the dead,
And yet you can tell that her cheeks once were red.
But love, ease and friendship and glory, I ween,
May hardly the cause of their fading have been.
Poor soul, she has wept so, she scarcely can see.
A skeleton infant she holds on her knee.
It tugs at her breast, and it whimpers and sleeps,
But soon at her cry it awakens and weeps—
“Two cents, my good woman, three candles will
buy,
As bright as their flame be my star in the sky!”

Tho' few are her wares, and her basket is small,
She earns her own living by these, when at all.
She's there with her baby in wind and in rain,
In frost and in snow-fall, in weakness and pain.
She trades and she trades, through the good times
and slack—

No home and no food, and no cloak to her back.
She's kithless and kinless—one friend at the most,
And that one is silent: the telegraph post!
She asks for no alms, the poor Jewess, but still,
Altho' she is wretched, forsaken and ill,
She cries Sabbath candles to those that come nigh,
And all that she pleads is, that people will buy.

To honor the sweet, holy Sabbath, each one
With joy in his heart to the market has gone.
To shops and to pushcarts they hurriedly fare;
But who for the poor, wretched woman will care?
A few of her candles you think they will take?—

They seek the meat patties, the fish and the cake.
She holds forth a hand with the pitiful cry:

"Two cents, my good women, three candles will
buy!"

But no one has listened, and no one has heard:
Her voice is so weak, that it fails at each word.
Perchance the poor mite in her lap understood,
She hears mother's crying—but where is the good?

I pray you, how long will she sit there and cry
Her candles so feebly to all that pass by?
How long will it be, do you think, ere her breath
Gives out in the horrible struggle with Death?
How long will this frail one in mother-love strong,
Give suck to the babe at her breast? Oh, how
long?

The child mother's tears used to swallow before,
But mother's eyes, nowadays, shed them no more.
Oh, dry are the eyes now, and empty the brain,
The heart well-nigh broken, the breath drawn
with pain.

Yet ever, tho' faintly, she calls out anew:
"Oh buy but two candles, good women, but two!"

In Hester Street stands on the pavement of stone
A small, orphaned basket, forsaken, alone.
Beside it is sitting a corpse, cold and stark:
The seller of candles—will nobody mark?
No, none of the passers have noticed her yet.
The rich ones, on feasting are busily set,
And such as are pious, you well may believe,
Have no time to spare on the gay Sabbath eve.
So no one has noticed and no one has seen.
And now comes the nightfall, and with it, serene,

The Princess, the Sabbath, from Heaven descends,
And all the gay throng to the synagogue wends.

Within, where they pray, all is cleanly and bright,
The cantor sings sweetly, they list with delight.
But why in a dream stands the tall chandelier,
As dim as the candles that gleam round a bier?
The candles belonged to the woman, you know,
Who died in the street but a short time ago.
The rich and the pious have brought them tonight,
For mother and child they have set them alight.
The rich and the pious their duty have done:
Her tapers are lighted who died all alone.
The rich and the pious are nobly behaved:
A body—what matters? But souls must be saved!

O synagogue lights, be ye witnesses bold
That mother and child died of hunger and cold
Where millions are squandered in idle display;
That men, all unheeded, must starve by the way.
Then hold back your flame, blessed lights, hold it
fast!

The great day of judgment will come at the last.
Before the white throne, where imposture is vain,
Ye lights for the soul, ye'll be lighted again!
And upward your flame there shall mount as on
wings,
And damn the existing false order of things!

THE PALE OPERATOR

If but with my pen I could draw him,
With terror you'd look in his face;
For he, since the first day I saw him,
Has sat there and sewed in his place.

Years pass in procession unending,
And ever the pale one is seen,
As over his work he sits bending,
And fights with the soulless machine.

I feel, as I gaze at each feature,
Perspiring and grimy and wan,
It is not the strength of the creature,—
The will only, urges him on.

And ever the sweat-drops are flowing,
They fall o'er his thin cheek in streams,
They water the stuff he is sewing,
And soak themselves into the seams.

How long shall the wheel yet, I pray you,
Be chased by the pale artisan?
And what shall the ending be, say you?
Resolve the dark riddle who can!

I know that it cannot be reckoned,—
But one thing the future will show:
When this man has vanished, a second
Will sit in his place there and sew.

THE BEGGAR FAMILY

Within the court, before the judge,
There stand six wretched creatures,
They're lame and weary, one and all,
With pinched and pallid features.
The father is a broken man,
The mother weak and ailing,
The little children, skin and bone,
With fear and hunger wailing.

Their sins are very great, and call
Aloud for retribution,
For their's (maybe you guess!) the crime
Of hopeless destitution.
They look upon the judge's face,
They know what judges ponder,
They know the punishment that waits
On those that beg and wander.

For months from justice they have fled
Along the streets and highways,
From farm to farm, from town to town,
Along the lanes and byways.
They've slept full oftentimes in jail,
They're known in many places;
Yet still they live, for all the woe
That's stamped upon their faces.

The woman's chill with fear. The man
Implores the judge: "Oh tell us,
What will you? With our children small
Relentlessly expel us?
Oh let us be! We'll sleep at night
In corners dark; the city
Has room for all! And some kind soul
Will give a crust in pity.

"For wife and children I will toil:
It cannot be much longer
(For God almighty is and good!)
Ere I for work am stronger.
Oh let us here with men remain,
Nor drive us any further!
Oh why our curses will you have,
And not our blessings rather!"

And now the sick man quails before
The judge's piercing glances:
"No, only two of you shall go
This time and take your chances.
Your wife and you! The children four
You'll leave, my man, behind you,
For them, within the Orphan's Home,
Free places I will find you."

The father's dumb—the mother shrieks:
“My babes and me you'd sever?
If God there be, such cruel act
Shall find forgiveness never!
But first, oh judge, must you condemn
To death their wretched mother—
I cannot leave my children dear
With you or any other!

“I bore and nursed them, struggling still
To shelter and to shield them,
Oh judge, I'll beg from door to door,
My very life-blood yield them!
I know you do not mean it, judge,
With us poor folk you're jesting.
Give back my babes, and further yet
We'll wander unprotesting.”

The judge, alas! has turned away,
The paper dread unrolled,
And useless all the mother's grief,
The wild and uncontrolled.
More cruel can a sentence be
Than that which now is given?
Oh cursed the system 'neath whose sway
The human heart is riven!

A MILLIONAIRE

No, not from tuning-forks of gold
Take I my key for singing;
From Upper Seats no order bold
Can set my music ringing;
But groans the slave through sense of wrong,
And naught my voice can smother;
As flame leaps up, so leaps my song
For my oppressed brother.

And thus the end comes swift and sure . . .
Thus life itself must leave me;
For what can these my brothers poor
In compensation give me,
Save tears for ev'ry tear and sigh?—
(For they are rich in anguish).
A millionaire of tears am I,
And mid my millions languish.

SEPTEMBER MELODIES

I

The summer is over!
'Tis windy and chilly.
The flowers are dead in the dale.
All beauty has faded,
The rose and the lily
In death-sleep lie withered and pale.

Now hurries the stormwind
A mournful procession
Of leaves and dead flowers along,
Now murmurs the forest
Its dying confession,
And hushed is the holiest song.

Their "prayers of departure"
The wild birds are singing,
They fly to the wide stormy main.
Oh tell me, ye loved ones,
Whereto are ye winging?
Oh answer: when come ye again?

Oh hark to the wailing
For joys that have vanished!
The answer is heavy with pain:
Alas! We know only
That hence we are banished—
But God knows of coming again!

II

The Tkiyes*-man has blown his horn,
And swift the days' declining;
The leaves drop off, in fields forlorn
Are tender grasses pining.

The earth will soon be cold and bare,
Her robe of glory falling;
Already to the mourner's prayer
The last wild bird is calling.

He sings so sweetly and so sad
A song of friends who parted,
That even if it find you glad,
It leaves you broken hearted.

The copses shudder in the breeze,
Some dream-known terror fearing.
Awake! O great and little trees!
The Judgment-day is nearing!

O men! O trees in copses cold!
Beware the rising weather!
Or late or soon, both young and old
Shall strew the ground together. . . .

*Tkiye: first blast of the Ram's horn.

DEPRESSION

All the striving, all the failing,
To the silent Nothing sailing.
Swiftly, swiftly passing by!
For the land of shadows leaving,
Where a wistful hand is weaving
Thy still woof, Eternity!

Gloomy thoughts in me awaken,
And with fear my breast is shaken,
Thinking: O thou black abyss;
All the toil and thrift of life,
All the struggle and the strife,
Shall it come at last to this?

With the grave shall be requited
Good and evil, and united
Ne'er to separate again?
What the light hath parted purely,
Shall the darkness join more surely?—
Was the vict'ry won in vain?

O mute and infinite extension,
O time beyond our comprehension,
Shall thought and deed ungarnered fall?
Ev'rything dost take and slay,
Ev'rything dost bear away,
Silent Nothing, silent All! . . .

THE CANARY

The free canary warbles
In leafy forest dell:
Who feels what rapture thrills her,
And who her joy can tell?

The sweet canary warbles
Where wealth and splendor dwell:
Who knows what sorrow moves her,
And who her pain can tell?

WANT AND I

Who's there? who's there? who was it tried
To force the entrance I've denied?
An 'twere a friend, I'd gladly borne it,
But no—'twas Want! I could have sworn it.
I heard thy voice, old witch, I know thee!
Avaunt, thou evil hag, beshrew thee!
God's curse! why seekest thou to find me?
Away to all black years behind me!

To torture me was thine endeavor,
My body from my soul to sever,
Of pride and courage to deprive me,
And into beggary to drive me.
Begone, where thousand devils burn—
Begone, nor evermore return!
Begone, most wretched thou of creatures,
And hide for aye thine hateful features!
—Beloved, ope the door in pity!

No friend have I in all the city
Save thee, then open to my call!
The night is bleak, the snowflakes fall.
Thine own, old Want am I, believe me!
Ah, what delight, wilt thou receive me?
I found, when I from thee had parted,
No friend but he was fickle-hearted!

Away, old hag! . Thou liest, lo,
Thou harbinger of pain and woe!
Away—am I thine only friend?
Thy lovers pale, they have no end!
Thou vile one, may the devil take thee!
Begone and no more visits make me!
For—Yiddish writers not to mention—
Men hold thee no such rare invention.

—'Tis true! yet those must wait my leisure.
To be with thee is now my pleasure.
I love thy black and curling hair,
I love thy wounded heart's despair,
I love thy sighs, I love to swallow
Thy tears and all thy songs to follow.
Oh great indeed, might I but show it,
My love for thee, my pale-faced poet!

Away, I've heard all that before,
And am a writer, mark, no more.
Instead of verses, wares I tell,
And candy and tobacco sell.
My life is sweet, my life is bitter.
I'm ready and a prompt acquitter.
Oh, smarter traders there are many,
Yet live I well and turn a penny.

—A dealer then wilt thou remain,
Forever from the pen abstain?
Good resolutions time disperses:
Thou yet shalt hunger o'er thy verses,
But vainly seeking to excuse thee
Because thou dost, tonight, refuse me.
Then open, fool, I tell thee plain,
That we perforce shall meet again.

Begone the way that I direct thee!
I've millionaires now to protect me;
No need to beg, no need to borrow,
Nor fear a penniless tomorrow,
Nor walk with face of blackest omen
To thrill the hearts of stupid foemen,
Who fain my pride to earth would bring,
Because, forsooth, I sweetly sing!

—Ho ho! ere thou art grown much older,
Thy millionaires will all grow colder.
Thou soon shalt be forgotten by them—
They've other things to occupy them!
Just now with thee they're playing kindly,
But fortune's wheel is turning blindly
To grind thy pleasures ere thou know it—
And thou art left to me, my poet!

THE PHANTOM VESSEL

Now the last, long rays of sunset
To the tree-tops are ascending,
And the ash-gray evening shadows
Weave themselves around the earth.

On the crest of yonder mountain,
Now are seen from out the distance
Slowly fading crimson traces;
Footprints of the dying day.

Blood-stained banners, torn and tattered,
Hanging in the western corner,
Dip their parched and burning edges
In the cooling ocean wave.

Smoothly roll the crystal wavelets
Through the dusky veils of twilight,
That are trembling down from heaven
O'er the bosom of the sea.

Soft a little wind is blowing
O'er the gently rippling waters—
What they whisper, what they murmur,
Who is wise enough to say?

Broad her snow-white sails outspreading
'Gainst the quiet sky of evening,
Flies a ship without a sailor,
Flies—and whither, who can tell?

As by magic moves the rudder;
Borne upon her snowy pinions
Flies the ship—as tho' a spirit
Drove her onward at its will!

Empty is she, and deserted,
Only close beside the mainmast
Stands a lonely child, heartbroken,
Sobbing loud and bitterly.

Long and golden curls are falling
Down his neck and o'er his shoulders;
Now he glances backward sighing,
And the silent ship flies on!

With a little, shining kerchief,
Fluttering upon the breezes,
Unto me he sends a greeting,
From afar he waves farewell.

And my heart is throbbing wildly,
I am weeping—tell me wherefore?
God! that lovely child, I know him!
'Tis my youth that flies from me!

TO MY MISERY

O Misery of mine, no other
In faithfulness can match with thee,
Thou more than friend, and more than brother,
The only thing that cares for me!

Where'er I turn, are unkind faces,
And hate and treachery and guile,
Thou, Mis'ry, in all times and places,
Dost greet me with thy pallid smile.

At birth I found thee waiting for me,
I knew thee in my cradle first,
The same small eyes and dim watched o'er me,
The same dry, bony fingers nursed.

And day by day when morning lightened,
To school thou led'st me—home did'st bring,
And thine were all the blooms that brightened
The chilly landscape of my spring.

And, thou my match and marriage monger,
The marriage deed by thee was read;
The hands foretelling need and hunger
Were laid in blessing on my head.

Thy love for me shall last unshaken,
No further proof I ask, for when
My hopes for aye were from me taken,
My Mis'ry, thou wert with me then;

And still, while sorrow's storm is breaking
Above me, and my head I bow—
The kindly and the unforsaking,
Oh Mis'ry, thou art with me now.

Ay, still from out Fate's gloomy towers
I see thee come to me again,
With wreaths of everlasting flowers,
And songs funereal in thy train.

And when life's curses rock me nightly,
And hushed I lie in slumber's hold,
Thy sable form comes treading lightly
To wrap me in its garments fold.

Thy brother let me be, and wholly
Repay thee all I owe, tho' late:
My aching heart, my melancholy,
My songs to thee I dedicate.

O LONG THE WAY

O long the way and short the day,
No light in tower or town,
The waters roar and far the shore—
My ship, my ship goes down!

'Tis all in vain to strive again,
My cry the billows drown,
The fight is done, the wind has won—
My ship, my ship goes down!

Bright sun, adieu! Thou'lt shine anew
When skies no longer frown,
But I—the deafening billows crash—
My ship, my ship goes down!

TO THE FORTUNE SEEKER

A little more, a little less!—
O shadow-hunters pitiless,
Why then so eager, say!
What'er you leave the grave will take,
And all you gain and all you make,
It will not last a day!

Full soon will come the Reaper Black,
Cut thorns and flowers mark his track
Across Life's meadow blithe.
Oppose him, meet him as you will,
Old Time's behests he harkens still,
Unsparring wields his scythe.

A horrid mutiny by stealth
Breaks out,—of power, fame and wealth
Deserted you shall be!
The foam upon your lip is rife;
The last enigma now of Life
Shall Death resolve for thee.

You call for help—'tis all in vain!
What have you for your toil and pain,
What have you at the last?
Poor luckless hunter, are you dumb?
This way the cold pall-bearers come:
A beggar's soul has passed!

A little less, a little more!—
Look forth, look forth! without the door
There stands a robber old.
He'll force your ev'ry lock and spring,
And all your goods he'll take and fling
On Stygian waters cold.

MY YOUTH

Come, beneath yon verdant branches,
Come, my own, with me!
Come, and there my soul will open
Secret doors to thee.
Yonder shalt thou learn the secrets
Deep within my breast,
Where my love upsprings eternal;—
Come! with pain opprest,
Yonder all the truth I'll tell thee,
Tell it thee with tears
(Ah, so long have we been parted,
Years of youth, sweet years!)

See'st thou the dancers floating
On a stream of sound?
There alone, the soul entrancing,
Happiness is found!
Magic music, hark! it calls us,
Ringing wild and sweet!
One, two, three!—beloved, haste thee,
Point thy dainty feet!
Now at last I feel that living
Is no foolish jest
(O sweet years of youth departed,
Vanished with the rest!)

Fiddler, play a little longer!
Why this hurry, say?
I'm but half-way through a measure—
Yet a little play!
Smiling in her wreath of flowers
Is my love not fair?
See us in the charmed circle,
Flitting light as air!
Haste thee, loved one, for the music
Shall be hushed anon . . .
(O sweet years of youth departed,
Whither are ye gone?)

Gracious youth of mine, so quickly
Hath it come to this?
Lo, where flowed the golden river,
Yawns the black abyss!
Where, oh where is my beloved,
Where the wreath of flowers?
Where, oh where the merry fiddler,
Where those happy hours?
Shall I never hear the echoes
Of those songs again?
Oh, on what hills are they ringing,
O'er what sunny plain?
May not I from out the distance
Cast one backward glance
On that fair and lost existence,
Youth's sweet dalliance?
Foolish dreamer! Time hath snatched it,
And, tho' man implore,
Joys that *he* hath reaped and garnered
Bloom again no more!

IN THE WILDERNESS

Alone in desert dreary,
A bird with folded wings
Beholds the waste about her,
And sweetly, sweetly sings.

So heaven-sweet her singing,
So clear the bird notes flow,
'Twould seem the rocks must waken,
The desert vibrant grow.

Dead rocks and silent mountains
Would'st waken with thy strain,—
But dumb are still the mountains,
And dead the rocks remain.

For whom, O heavenly singer,
Thy song so clear and free?
Who hears or sees or heeds thee,
Who feels or cares for thee ?

Thou may'st outpour in music
Thy very soul . . . 'Twere vain!
In stone thou canst not waken
A throb of joy or pain.

Thy song shall soon be silenced;
I feel it . . . For I know
Thy heart is near to bursting
With loneliness and woe.

Ah, vain is thine endeavor;
It naught availeth—nay;
For lonely as thou camest,
So shalt thou pass away.

I'VE OFTEN LAUGHED

I've often laughed and oftener still have wept,
A sighing always through my laughter crept,
Tears were not far away . . .
What is there to say?

I've spoken much and oftener held by tongue,
For still the most was neither said nor sung.
Could I but tell it so . . .
What is there to know?

I've hated much and loved, oh so much more!
Fierce contrasts at my very heartstrings tore . . .
I tried to fight them—well . . .
What is there to tell?

AGAIN I SING MY SONGS

Once again my songs I sing thee,
Now the spell is broken;
Brothers, yet again I bring thee
Songs of love the token.
Of my joy and of my sorrow
Gladly, sadly bringing;—
Summer not a song would borrow —
Winter sets me singing.

O when life turns sad and lonely,
When our joys are dead;
When are heard the ravens only
In the trees o'erhead;
When the stormwind on the bowers
Wreaks its wicked will,
When the frost paints lying flowers,
How should I be still?

When the clouds are low descending,
And the sun is drowned;
When the winter knows no ending,
And the cold is crowned;
When with evil gloom oppressed
Lie the ruins bare;
When a sigh escapes the breast,
Takes us unaware;

When the snow-wrapped mountain dreams
Of its summer gladness,
When the wood is stripped and seems
Full of care and sadness;
When the songs are growing still
As in Death's repose,
And the heart is growing chill,
And the eyelids close;

Then, O then I can but sing
For I dream her coming—
May, sweet May! I see her bring
Buds and wild-bee humming!
Through the silence heart-appalling,
As I stand and listen,
I can hear her song-birds calling,
See her green leaves glisten!

Thus again my songs I sing thee,
Now the spell is broken;
Brothers, yet again I bring thee
Of my love the token.
Of my joy and of my sorrow
Gladly, sadly bringing,—
Summer not a song would borrow!—
Winter sets me singing.

LIBERTY

When night and silence deep
Hold all the world in sleep,
As tho' Death claimed the Hour,
By some strange witchery
Appears her form to me,
As tho' Magic were her dow'r.

Her beauty heaven's light!
Her bosom snowy white!
But pale her cheek appears.
Her shoulders firm and fair;
A mass of gold her hair.
Her eyes—the home of tears.

She looks at me nor speaks.
Her arms are raised; she seeks
Her fettered hands to show.
On both white wrists a chain!—
She cries and pleads in pain:
“Unbind me!— Let me go!”

I burn with bitter ire,
I leap in wild desire
The cruel bonds to break;
But God! around the chain
Is coiled and coiled again
A long and loathsome snake.

I shout, I cry, I chide;
My voice goes far and wide,
A ringing call to men:
"Oh come, let in the light!
Arise! Ye have the might!
Set Freedom free again!"

They sleep. But I strive on.
They sleep! . . . Can't wake a stone? . . .
That one might stir! but one!
Call I, or hold my peace,
None comes to her release;
And hope for her is none.

But who may see her plight
And not go mad outright! . . .
"Now: up! For Freedom's sake!"
I spring to take her part:—
"Fool!" cries a voice. I start . . .
In anguish I awake.

A TREE IN THE GHETTO

There stands in th' leafless Ghetto
One spare-leaved, ancient tree;
Above the Ghetto noises
It moans eternally.

In wonderment it muses,
And murmurs with a sigh:
"Alas! how God-forsaken
And desolate am I!

"Alas, the stony alleys,
And noises loud and bold!
Where are ye, birds of summer?
Where are ye, woods of old?

"And where, ye breezes balmy
That wandered vagrant here?
And where, oh sweep of heavens
So deep and blue and clear?

"Where are ye, mighty giants?
Ye come not riding by
Upon your fiery horses,
A-whistling merrily.

"Of other days my dreaming,
Of other days, ah me!
When sturdy hero-races
Lived wild and glad and free!

"The old sun shone, how brightly!
The old lark sang, what song!
O'er earth Desire and Gladness
Reigned happily and long

"But see! what are these ant-hills?—
These ants that creep and crawl? . . .
Bereft of man and nature,
My life is stripped of all!

"And I, an ancient orphan,
What do I here alone?
My friends have all departed,
My youth and glory gone.

"Oh, tear me, root and branches!
No longer let me be
A living head-stone, brooding
O'er the grave of liberty."

THE CEMETERY NIGHTINGALE

In the hills' embraces holden,
In a valley filled with glooms,
Lies a cemetery olden,
Strewn with countless mould'ring tombs.

Ancient graves o'erhung with mosses,
Crumbling stones, effaced and green,—
Venturesome is he who crosses,
Night or day, the lonely scene.

Blasted trees and willow streamers,
'Midst the terror round them spread,
Seem like awe-bound, silent dreamers
In this garden of the dead.

One bird, anguish stricken, lingers
In the shadow of the vale,
First and best of feathered singers,—
'Tis the churchyard nightingale.

As from bough to bough he flutters,
Sweetest songs of woe and wail
Through his gift divine he utters
For the dreamers in the vale.

Listen how his trills awaken
Echoes from each mossy stone!
Of all places he has taken
God's still Acre for his own.

* * * * *

Not on Spring or Summer glory,
Not on god or angel story
Loyal poet-fancy dwells!
Not on streams for rich men flowing,
Not on fields for rich men's mowing,—
Graves he sees, of graves he tells.
Pain, oppression, woe eternal,
Open heart-wounds deep, diurnal,
Nothing comforts or allays;
O'er God's Acre in each nation
Sings he songs of tribulation
Tunes his golden harp and plays.

THE CREATION OF MAN

When the world was first created
By th' all-wise Eternal One,
Asked he none for help or counsel,—
Simply spake, and it was done!

Made it for his own good pleasure,
Shaped it on his own design,
Spent a long day's work upon it,
Formed it fair and very fine.

Soon he thought on man's creation,—
Then perplexities arose,
So the Lord His winged Senate
Called, the question to propose:

Hear, my great ones, why I called ye,
Hear and help me ye who can,
Hear and tell me how I further
Shall proceed in making man.

Ponder well before ye answer,
And consider, children dear;—
In our image I would make him,
Free from stain, from blemish clear.

Of my holy fire I'd give him,
Crowned monarch shall he be,
Ruling with a sway unquestioned
Over earth and air and sea.

Birds across the blue sky winging
Swift shall fly before his face,—
Silver fishes in the ocean,
Savage lion in the chase.

—How? This toy of froth and vapor,
Thought the Senate, filled with fear,
If so wide his kingdom stretches,
Shortly he will break in here!

So the Lord they answered, saying:—
Mind and strength Thy creature give,
Form him in our very image,
Lord, but wingless let him live!

Lest he shame the soaring eagle
Let no wings to man be giv'n,
Bid him o'er the earth be ruler,
Lord, but keep him out of heav'n!

Wisely said, the Lord made answer,
Lo, your counsel fair I take!
Yet, my Senate, one exception—
One alone, I will to make.

One exception! for the poet,
For the singer, shall have wings;
He the gates of Heav'n shall enter,
Highest of created things.

One I single from among ye,
One to watch the ages long,
Promptly to admit the poet
When he hears his holy song.

JOURNALISM

Written today, and read today,
And stale the news tomorrow!—
Upon the sands I build . . . I *play!*
I play, and weep in sorrow:
“Ah God, dear God! to find cessation
From this soul-crushing occupation!
If but one year ere Thou dost call me Thither,
Lord, at this blighting task let me not wither.”

PEN AND SHEARS

My tailor's shears I scornèd then;
I strove for something higher:
To edit news—live by the pen—
The pen that shall not tire!

The pen, that was my humble slave,
Has now enslaved its master;
And fast as flows its Midas-wave,
My rebel tears flow faster.

The world I clad once, tailor-hired,
Whilst I in tatters quakèd,
Today, you see me well attired,
Who lets the world go naked.

What human soul, how'er oppressed,
Can feel my chained soul's yearning!
A monster woe lies in my breast,
In voiceless anguish burning.

Oh, swing ajar the shop door, do!
I'll bear as ne'er I bore it.
My blood! . . . you sweatshop leeches,
you! . . .
Now less I'll blame you for it.

I'll stitch as ne'er in former years;
I'll drive the mad wheel faster;
Slave will I be but to the shears;
The pen shall know its master!

FOR HIRE

Work with might and main,
Or with hand and heart,
Work with soul and brain,
Or with holy art,
Thread, or genius' fire—
Make a vest, or verse—
If 'tis done for hire,
It is done the worse.

A FELLOW SLAVE

Pale-faced is he, as in the door
He stands and trembles visibly,—
With diffidence approaches me,
And says: “Dear editor,

“Since write you must, in prose or rhyme,
Expose my master’s knavery,—
Condemn, I pray, the slavery
That dominates our time.

“I labor for a wicked man
Who holds o’er all my being sway,—
Who keeps me harnessed night and day,
Since work I first began.

“No leisure moments do I store,
Yet harsh words only will he speak;
My days are his, from week to week,
But still he cries for more.

“Oh print, I beg you, all I’ve said,
And ask the world if this be right:
To give the worker wage so slight
That he must want for bread.

“See, I have sinews powerful,
And I’ve endurance, subtle skill,—
Yet may not use them at my will,
But live a master’s tool.

"But oh, without avail do I
Lay bare the woes of workingmen!
Who earns his living by the pen,
Feels not our misery."

The pallid slave yet paler grew,
And ended here his bitter cry . . .
And thus to him I made reply:
"My friend, you judge untrue.

"My strength and skill, like yours, are gain
For others . . . Sold! . . . You
understand?
Your master—well—he owns your hand,
And mine—he owns my brain."

THE JEWISH MAY

May has come from out the showers,
Sun and splendor in her train.
All the grasses and the flowers
Waken up to life again.
Once again the leaves do show,
And the meadow blossoms blow,
Once again through hills and dales
Rise the songs of nightingales.

Wheresoe'er on field or hillside
With her paint-brush Spring is seen,—
In the valley, by the rillside,
All the earth is decked with green.
Once again the sun beguiles—
Moves the drowsy world to smiles.
See! the sun, with mother-kiss
Wakes her child to joy and bliss.

Now each human feeling presses
Flow'r like, upward to the sun,
Softly, through the heart's recesses,
Steal sweet fancies, one by one.
Golden dreams, their wings outshaking,
Now are making
Realms celestial,
All of azure,
New life waking,
Bringing treasure
Out of measure
For the soul's delight and pleasure.

Who then, tell me, old and sad,
Nears us with a heavy tread?
On the sward in verdure clad,
Lonely is the strange newcomer,
Wearily he walks and slow,—
His sweet springtime and his summer
Faded long and long ago!

Say, who is it yonder walks
Past the hedgerows decked anew,
While a fearful spectre stalks
By his side the woodland through?
'Tis our ancient friend the Jew!
No sweet fancies hover round him,
Naught but terror and distress.
Wounds unhealed
Where lie revealed
Ghosts of former recollections,
Corpses, corpses, old affections,
Buried youth and happiness.

Brier and blossom bow to meet him
In derision round his path;
Gloomily the hemlocks greet him
And the crow screams out in wrath.
Strange the birds and strange the flowers,
Strange the sunshine seems and dim,
Folk on earth and heav'nly powers!—
Lo, the May is strange to him!

Little flowers, it were meeter
If ye made not quite so bold:
Sweet ye are, but oh, far sweeter
Knew he in the days of old!

Oranges by thousands glowing
Filled his groves on either hand,—
All the plants were God's own sowing
In his happy, far-off land!

Ask the cedars on the mountain!
Ask them, for they know him well!
Myrtles green by Sharon's fountain,
In whose shade he loved to dwell!
Ask the Mount of Olives beauteous,—
Ev'ry tree by ev'ry stream!—
One and all will answer duteous
For the fair and ancient dream. . . .

O'er the desert and the pleasance
Gales of Eden softly blew,
And the Lord His loving Presence
Evermore declared anew.
Angel children at their leisure
Played in thousands round His tent,
Countless thoughts of joy and pleasure
God to His beloved sent.

There in bygone days and olden,
From a wond'rous harp and golden
Charmed he music spirit-haunting,
Holy, chaste and soul-enchanting.
Never with the ancient sweetness,
Never in its old completeness
Shall it sound: his dream is ended,
On a willow-bough suspended. . . .

Gone that dream so fair and fleeting!
Yet behold: thou dreamst anew!
Hark! a *new* May gives thee greeting
From afar. Dost hear it, Jew?
Weep no more, altho' with sorrows
Bow'd e'en to the grave: I see
Happier years and brighter morrows,
Dawning, Israel, for thee!
Hear'st thou not the promise ring
Where, like doves on silver wing,
Thronging cherubs sweetly sing
Newmade songs of what shall be ?

Hark! your olives shall be shaken,
And your citrons and your limes
Filled with fragrance. God shall waken.
Lead you as in olden times.
In the pastures by the river
Ye once more your flocks shall tend.
Ye shall live, and live forever
Happy lives that know no end.
No more wandering, no more sadness:
Peace shall be your lot, and still
Hero hearts shall throb with gladness
'Neath Moriah's silent hill.
Nevermore of dread afflictions
Or oppression need ye tell:
Filled with joy and benedictions
In the old home shall ye dwell.
To the fatherland returning,
Following the homeward path,
Ye shall find the embers burning
Still upon the ruined hearth!

THE FEAST OF LIGHTS

Little candles glistening,
Telling those are listening
Legends manifold,
Many a little story,
Tales of blood and glory
Of the days of old.

As I watch you flicker,
As I list you bicker,
Speak the ancient dreams:
—You have battled, Jew, one time,
You have conquer'd too, one time.
(God, how strange it seems!)

In your midst was order once,
And within your border once
Strangers took no part.
Jew, you had a land one time,
And an armèd hand, one time.
(How it moves the heart!)

Glisten, candles, glisten!
As I stand and listen
All the grief in me,
All the woe is stirred again,
And the question heard again:
What the end shall be ?

CHANUKAH THOUGHTS

Not always as you see us now,
Have we been used to weep and sigh,
We too have grasped the sword, I trow,
And seen astonished foemen fly!

We too have rushed into the fray,
For our Belief the battle braved,
And through the spears have fought our way,
And high the flag of vict'ry waved.

But generations go and come,
And suns arise and set in tears,
And we are weakened now and dumb,
Foregone the might of ancient years.

In exile where the wicked reign,
Our courage and our pride expired,
But e'en today each throbbing vein
With Asmonean blood is fired.

Tho' cruel hands with mighty flail
Have threshed us, yet we have not blenched;
The sea of blood could naught prevail,
That fire is burning, still unquenched.

Our fall is great, our fall is real,
(You need but look on us to tell!)
Yet in us lives the old Ideal
Which all the nations shall not quell.

SFERE

I asked of my Muse, had she any objection
To laughing with me,—not a word for reply!
You see, it is Sfêré, our time for dejection,—
And can a Jew laugh when the rule is to cry?

You laughed then, you say? 'tis a sound to affright
one!

In Jewish delight, what is worthy the name?
The laugh of a Jew! It is never a right one,
For laughing and groaning with him are the
same.

You thought there was zest in a Jewish existence?
You deemd that the star of a Jew could be kind?
The Spring calls and beckons with gracious in-
sistence,—
Jew,—sit down in sackcloth and weep yourself
blind!

The garden is green and the woodland rejoices;
How cool are the breezes, with fragrance how
blent!
But Spring calls not *you* with her thousand sweet
voices!—
With you it is Sfêré,—sit still and lament!

The beautiful summer, this life's consolation,
In moaning and sighing glides quickly away.
What hope can it offer to one of my nation?
What joy can he find in the splendors of May?

Bewildered and homeless, of whom whoso passes
May fearlessly stop to make sport at his ease,—
Say, is it for him to seek flowers and grasses,
For him to be thinking on meadows and trees?

And if for a moment, forgetting to ponder
On grief and oppression, song breaks out anew,
I hear in his lay only: "Wander and wander!"
And ev'ry note tells me the singer's a Jew.

A skilful musician, and one who is verséd
In metre and measure, whenever he hears
The pitiful song of the Jewish disperséd,
It touches his heart and it moves him to tears.

The blast of the Ram's-horn that quavers and
trembles,—
On this, now, alone Jewish fancy is bent.
To grief and contrition its host it assembles,
And causes the stoniest heart to relent.

The wail that went up when the Temple was shattered,—
The song of Atonement, the Suppliant's psalm,—
These only he loves, since they took him—and
scattered,—
Away from the land of the balsam and balm.

Of all the sweet instruments, shiver'd and broken,
That once in the Temple delighted his ear,
The Ram's-horn alone has he kept, as a token,
And sobs out his soul on it once in the year.

Instead of the harp and the viol and cymbal,
Instead of the lyre, the guitar and the flute,
He has but the dry, wither'd Ram's-horn, the sym-
bol
Of gloom and despondence; the rest all are
mute.

He laughs, or he breaks into song, but soon after,
Tho' fain would he take in man's gladness a
part,
One hears, low resounding athwart the gay laugh-
ter,
The Suppliant's psalm,—and it pierces the heart.

I asked of my Muse, had she any objection
To laughing with me,—not a word for reply!
You see, it is Sféré, our time for dejection,—
And can a Jew laugh when the rule is to cry?

MEASURING THE GRAVES

First old Minna, bent and lowly,
Eyes with weeping nearly blind;
Pessyeh-Tsvaitel, slowly, slowly,
With the yarn creeps on behind.

On the holy book of Minna
Fall the tear-drops—scarce a word
(For the heart is moved within her)
Of her praying can be heard.

“Mighty Lord, whose sovereign pleasure
Made all worlds and men of dust,
I, Thy humble handmaid, measure,
God, the dwellings of the just.

“Speechless here the ground they cumber,
Where the pious, gracious God,
Where Thy heart’s beloved slumber
Underneath the quiet sod.

“They who sing in jubilation,
Lord, before Thy holy seat,
Each one from his habitation,
Through the dream for ever sweet.

“From the yarn with which I measure,
Pessyeh-Tsvaitel, filled with awe,
Wicks will make, to search the treasure,
Nightly, of Thy holy Law.

Praying still, by faith sustained:
 'Thou with whom the holy dwell,
Scorn not Jacob's prayer unfeigned,
 Mark the tears of Israel! "

THE FIRST BATH OF ABLUTION

The wind is keen, the frost is dread,
Toward the icy water,
By aunt and mother forth is led
The fisher's lovely daughter.

"Dive in, dive in, my child, with haste!
There's naught whereon to ponder,
The time, dear heart, we must not waste:
The sun has set out yonder.

"God's mercy, child, is great and sure:
Fear not but He will show it!
Leap in,—leap out! and you are pure,—
'Tis over ere you know it!"

The frost and cold with cruel knife
The tender form assail.
Ah, would you be a Jewish wife,
You must not weep and quail!

And in—and out,—she leaps. Once more!
Poor girl, it has not served you.
No purer are you than before:
A Gentile has observed you!

And into th' icy flood again,
In terror wild she leaps!
The white limbs shudder . . . all in vain!
The Christian—still he peeps.

The frost and cold, they burn and bite,
The women rub their fingers,
The lovely child grows white—and white,
As on the bank she lingers.

“The Law, my child, we must fulfill,
The scoundrel see depart !
Yet once ! 'tis but a moment's chill,
'Tis but a trifling smart !”

The white-faced child the Law has kept,
The covenant unstained,
For in the waters deep she leapt,
And there below remained.

ATONEMENT EVENING PRAYER

Atonement Day—evening pray'r—sadness profound.

The soul-lights, so clear once, are dying around.

The reader is spent, and he barely can speak;

The people are faint, e'en the basso is weak.

The choristers pine for the hour of repose.

Just one—two chants more, and the pray'r book
we close!

And now ev'ry Jew's supplication is ended,

And Nilah* approaching, and twilight descended.

The blast of the New Year is blown on the horn,

All go; by the Ark I am standing forlorn,

And thinking: "How shall it be with us anon,

When closed is the temple, and ev'ryone gone!"

*Ne'ilah, (Hebrew) Conclusion, concluding prayer.

EXIT HOLIDAY

Farewell to the feast-day! the pray'r book is
stained

With tears; of the booth scarce a trace has re-
mained;

The lime branch is withered, the osiers are dying,
And pale as a corpse the fair palm-frond is lying;
The boughs of grey willow are trodden and
broken—

Friend, these are your hopes and your longings
unspoken!

Lo, there lie your dreamings all dimm'd and re-
jected,

And there lie the joys were so surely expected!

And there is the happiness blighted and perished,
And all that aforetime your soul knew and cher-
ished,

The loved and the longed for, the striven for
vainly—

Your whole life before you lies pictured how
plainly!

The branches are sapless, the leaves will decay,
An end is upon us, and whence, who shall say?

The broom of the beadle outside now has hustled
The lime and the palm that so pleasantly rustled.
There blew a cold gust, from our sight all is ban-
ished—

The shaft from a cross-bow less swiftly had van-
ished!

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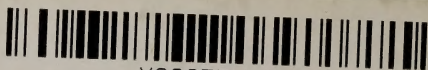
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